Fertile land under cultivation

†1391. SHRIMATI SUSHMA SWARAJ: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) the total fertile land actually under cultivation in the country;

(b) the extent of fertile agricultural land acquired or proposed to be acquired for Special Economic Zones, as on date; and

(c) whether shrinking of fertile land following the land acquisition would not adversely affect food security and distribution in country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI KANTILAL BHURIA): (a) As per available estimate, the total land under cultivation in the country is 182.57 million ha. in 2005-06 for which the figures are available.

(b) The total land area in the 366 valid formal approvals for setting up Special Economic Zones (SEZs) is about 48890 hectares, of this, about 21400 hectares of lands were already in the ownership/possession of State Industrial Development Corporations which were acquired for industrial purposes by the State Governments much prior to the introduction of the SEZ policy.

(c) As little area has been consumed for setting of SEZs as compared to the total cultivable land in the country, the adverse effect is expected to be quite minimal so far.

Neem project

1392. SHRI RAJKUMAR DHOOT: Will the Minister of CHEMICALS AND FERTILIZERS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Phase II of the Neem project has been developed and launched in September, 2006;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether commercial production of the project has commenced; and

(d) if so, the installed capacity and the target fixed for 2007-08?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CHEMICALS AND FERTILIZERS (SHRI B.K.HANDIQUE): (a) to (d) Yes, Sir. Phase II of the Neem project has commenced in October 2006. The objective of the project is to try environment friendly, neem seed based bio-pesticide especially on commercial plantations like Tea, Coffee and Spices. The project would provide the scientific basis for wider acceptance of the simple low cost technology of neem based pesticides for use in different crops as an alternative to chemical pesticides.

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi

The project which is being funded by the Department of Chemical and Petrochemicals is being implemented with the support of concerned research organizations namely Tocklai Experimental Station, Jorhat, Central Coffee Research Institute, Chikmagaloor, Indian Cardamom Research Institute (Spice Board) Myaldumpara, UPASI Tea Research Foundation, Coimbatore, Punjab State Council for Science and Technology, Chandigarh, Bidhan Chandra Krishi Viswavidyalaya, Kalyani, Institute of Pesticide Formulation Technology, Gurgaon, Industrial Toxicology Research Centre, Lucknow and the NGOs namely Neem Foundation, Nagpur, Vivekananda Institute of Biotechnology, Nimpith.

Regional Network of Pesticide for Asia and Pacific (RENPAP) is coordinating the implementation of the Project. The outlay for Phase II of the Neem project is Rs. 6.14 crores. The project period is 36 months.

The project also aims at stabilizing the product and carry out toxicological screening to establish a scientific basis for standardization of neem based pesticides so that the possibility of commercialization of the product by industry can be explored.

Import of fertilizers

1393. SHRI PRASANTA CHATTERJEE:
SHRI TAPAN KUMAR SEN:

Will the Minister of CHEMICALS AND FERTILIZERS be pleased to state:

(a) whether import of fertilizer becomes cheaper than setting up new fertilizer plants if the gas price as delivered is more than 5 dollar/(MMBTU); and

(b) if not, the prohibitive price of gas beyond which import becomes cheaper?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CHEMICALS AND FERTILIZERS (SHRI B.K. HANDIQUE): (a) and (b) The import price of urea varies in the international market, based on international demand supply scenario. It is estimated that new urea plants in the country will be competitive in the domestic market *vis-a-vis* imported urea, if the delivered price of gas is up to USS 5 per MMBTU. The delivered price of gas beyond this price, may make the new investment in this sector un-competitive. However, the price of gas beyond which import becomes cheaper will depend upon prices of urea prevailing in the international market at any given point of time.

LNG based urea plants

1394. SHRI PRASANTA CHATTERJEE:
SHRI TAPAN KUMAR SEN:

Will the Minister of CHEMICALS AND FERTILIZERS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have decided to switch over the existing FO/LSHS/ Naphtha based urea producing units in the country to natural gas/LNG based ones;

(b) if so, the details thereof, unit-wise;